CHARGE/ACTION
NEA-10
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RM/R	REP	AF
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ARA	EUR	FE
NEA	CU	INR 5
E 4	P	IO 2
61	S/P 1	AID 12
HC 1	SCI 4	S/S 27
AGR	COM	FRB
INT	LAB	TAR
TR	XMB	AIR 5
ARMY 3	CIA 10	NAVY 4
OSD 31	USIA 10	NSA 3
NSC 6		

SECRET FILE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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1966 FEB 17 AM 11 23

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO : AMMAN, BAGHDAD, BEIRUT, BONN, CAIRO, DAMASCUS, JIDDA, KUWAIT, LONDON, ROME, TAIZ, TEHERAN, TEL AVIV, KHARTOUM.

DISTRIBUTION BRANCH

FROM : Amembassy PARIS DATE: Feb.16/66

SUBJECT : France and the Near East

REF : Embassy Airgrams 2463 of April 2, 1964 and 2724 of April 29, 1964.

1. When the Embassy examined the French Government's actions and probable political intentions in the Middle East in April 1964 (references), i.e. roughly two years after France's resumption of diplomatic relations with area states, it concluded that General DeGaulle was ready to seek to expand French influence there once more to the extent permitted by circumstances and limited means available to him for this purpose. It noted that the French Government would probably capitalize on its independent posture and the residue of traditional French cultural influence which had survived in certain Middle East states. It expressed the view that France would resist Arab attempts to compel Paris to choose between the Arab World and Israel and pointed to indications of French efforts to proceed without affronting allied interests unnecessarily in this part of the world.

2. Time has largely borne out this picture of French intentions. French area aid programs have generally been noteworthy for their limited nature with heavy emphasis on cultural projects, loans and credit guarantees. Their moves have, with few exceptions, been carefully tailored to minimize conflict with the interests of the United States and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the interests of the United Kingdom, although they have been presented in such a way as to foster an impression of Gaullist "independence". Paris' modest area efforts have generally been crowned with success: France's regional popularity is now high and her influence (in some if not in all fields) substantial.

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Drafted by: POL:PSebastian:jp 2/11/66

Contents and Classification Approved by: POL:ELStanger

Clearances:
ECON: RAC for SMO
ATOMIC ENERGY: RAC for MB
POL/MIB: RBurns

3. Major regional developments during the period under review have called forth the following French responses and adjustments in posture:

A. France's reactions to the recrudescence of Arab-Israeli tensions and incidents have remained generally restrained while reflecting the increasing scope of Paris' relations with the Arab World and France's continuing interest in preserving regional stability.

B. There are indications that concern over the intentions of Israel in the domain of nuclear armaments may have led to a dilution or limitation of French assistance to Israel in the nuclear technology field.

C. French sensitivity to the public relations impact in the Arab World of France's transactions with Israel has grown. The French therefore try to minimize publicity concerning them. However, to the Embassy's knowledge no French activity or program with or in Israel has been suspended as a result of the expansion of Franco-Arab links. Instead, seemingly confident in the strength of their position, the French have not hesitated to offer the Arabs the same military aircraft they make available to Israel while quietly continuing to provide Israel with a broad range of military wherewithal, including substantial assistance in the development of MRBM's. France thus negotiated the sale of ten MIRAGE IIIE and two MIRAGE IIIB fighters to Lebanon. Other military aircraft and equipment sales were or are known to be under discussion with Israel, as well as Iran, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

D. French firms continued to strive to expand their commercial presence in the area, assisted whenever feasible by the French Government to the extent of its possibilities and interests.

E. Faced with the "third generation problem", the French Government has stiffened its opposition to a further expansion of the UNRWA's budget and operations.

4. Examining these French reactions and initiatives, the Embassy concludes:

A. The French Government continues to adhere to the policies outlined in paragraph (1) above.

B. France's position of ostensible independence vis-a-vis the West in general and the United States and Great Britain in particular is likely to be retained, since it still pays political dividends in the Arab World, where expectations of further benefits

from the developing relationship with France remain high.

C. From all indications, however, the French Government, conscious of its limited means, will continue to perceive advantages in planning its area moves so as to minimize damage to major U.S. and U.K. interests. Notwithstanding France's independent posture, key French and American interests in the Middle East, while not identical in scope, continue generally to be complementary when they are not parallel. This was illustrated by the circumstances (well known to the Department) surrounding the MIRAGE negotiations. It is further reflected in the French Government's position of opposition to nuclear proliferation; in France's use of her influence to help control continuing Arab-Israeli stresses; in Paris insistence on hard, commercial terms for arms which tends to limit the scope of military equipment transactions; and in the cautious French responses to Egyptian aid requests.

D. The substance of Franco-Israeli bilateral relations has not been greatly affected by the resumption of France's relations with the Eastern Arab states, and this situation seems likely to prevail until the growth of France's interests and presence in these states makes Paris more vulnerable to Arab pressure. France will thus persist in its refusal to choose the Arabs over Israel for some time to come.

E. French firms will continue to enjoy the backing of the French Government in their efforts to expand in Middle East markets; they will no doubt provide additional competition for American business in the process.

For the Ambassador:

Richard Funkhouser

Richard Funkhouser
Counselor of Embassy

Enclosure:
Paper entitled "Milestones Since April 1964."

ENCLOSURE TO AIRGRAM A-1613

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MILESTONES SINCE APRIL 1964

1964	
June 28	"Private visit" of Israel's new Prime Minister Levi Eshkol to France.
November 17-19	"Private visit" of Jordan's King Hussein to France. (First visit by an Arab sovereign to France since Suez.)
1965	
May 5-10	Lebanon's President Helou on "official visit" to France.
May 18	France to represent West Germany in Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Sudan.
July 24-29	Jordan's King Hussein on "State Visit" to France.
October 15-19	The UAR's Marshal Amer visits France. (He is the highest ranking Egyptian official to visit France since Suez.)
1966	
Jan 7	French Government release admits "private" Franco-Israeli missile development cooperation.
Jan 26	French sale of MIRAGE III fighters to Lebanon concluded.

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